



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

## THE EFFECT OF THE DISRUPTION ON THE HEBREW THOUGHT OF GOD

By J. M. POWIS SMITH  
University of Chicago

As I have indicated elsewhere,<sup>1</sup> the influence of the disruption of Israel in 933 B.C. upon the Hebrew God-idea is a subject that has as yet received no consideration in print. Attention has been focused exclusively upon the social and political effects of the Disruption, while its theological influence has been largely overlooked. And yet it seems that the logical inferences from the Disruption must have had much to do with shaping the later thought of God.

The idea of God that prevailed in Israel in the generation immediately preceding the Disruption is as well known to us as that of any generation in Israel. The older records for the period of Samuel, Saul, David, and Solomon are among the best in the Old Testament. They come from a relatively early period and they have been comparatively little affected by later editorial revision. They give us practically uncolored the point of view of a time lying very close to that which they describe. Furthermore, the concrete facts which they record as belonging to the period of the undivided monarchy carry the evidence of their genuineness imprinted upon them, and speak very clearly as to the social and religious ideas amid which they came to pass. The historical value of these materials is of the highest order. Kennedy, for example, speaking of a section of these records, says,

In virtue of their perfect style and their life-like portraiture, the amount of picturesque detail and the often dramatic intensity of the action, these twelve chapters [viz., II Sam., chaps. 9-20] constitute the finest, as they are the earliest, specimen of continuous prose narrative in the Old Testament. . . . The freshness and vividness of the narrative and the abundance of minute personal detail compel us to see in the author one who either himself played a part in the events he so graphically records, or has derived his

<sup>1</sup> *American Journal of Theology*, XIX (1915), 23.

information, at first hand, from those whose names are forever enshrined in his pages.<sup>1</sup>

We can therefore safely trust the testimony of these records as to the Hebrew thought of Yahweh in the half-century before the Disruption.

The relatively primitive character of the God-idea of the period in question is very clearly indicated by the data at hand. Yahweh's prophet issues an order to Saul to exterminate the Amalekites, men, women, and children, not to speak of their material possessions; declares that Saul has forfeited the kingdom because he has spared King Agag and some of the booty; and hews Agag "in pieces before Yahweh" with his own hands (I Sam., chap. 15). Saul was troubled by "an evil spirit from Yahweh" (I Sam. 16:14; 18:10, etc.), and the evil spirit could be charmed away by music (I Sam. 16:23). Yahweh was angry and refused to respond to Saul's appeals for guidance because Jonathan had unwittingly broken a vow made binding upon all Israel by his father (I Sam. 14:36-45). Yahweh's prophets were a gregarious order, prophesying *en masse*, needing music to stimulate their prophetic faculties, and subject to ecstatic trances, in some cases, of long duration (I Sam. 19:18-24). David in bringing up the ark of Yahweh into the heart of Jerusalem, danced before it in such a degree of nudity as to shock the sensibilities of a wife whom we have no reason to regard as a prude (II Sam. 6:20; cf. I Sam. 19:24). David, who with all his limitations was a devout and loyal worshiper of Yahweh, had in his house a teraphim which was clearly an idolatrous image of human proportions (I Sam. 19:13 ff.). Yahweh is said to have sent a three years' famine upon all Israel in the days of David, because his predecessor Saul had slain some of the Gibeonites and so had violated an oath sworn to by them and Israel in the earlier days. Seven of Saul's descendants are thereupon hung up "in the hill before Yahweh" by way of blood-revenge, "and after that God was intreated for the land" (II Sam. 21:1-14). "And again the anger of Yahweh was kindled against Israel, and he moved David against them, saying, 'Go,

<sup>1</sup> *Samuel* (New-Century Bible, 1905), pp. 20 f.; similarly as to these and other chapters: Driver, *Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (1914), pp. 176 f., 183; Dhorme, *Les livres de Samuel* (1910), pp. 8 f.; Kittel, *Geschichte des Volkes Israel*. I (1909), 157 f., 201; K. Budde, *Die Bücher Samuelis* (1902), p. xx.

number Israel and Judah.'” Because of this act, inspired by himself, Yahweh causes the death of seventy thousand men in Israel, and the slaughter was stayed even then only because David sacrificed burnt-offerings and peace-offerings upon Araunah’s threshing floor (II Sam. 24:1–25).

But the most instructive incident, perhaps, for an appreciation of our problem is that recorded in I Sam. 26:17–20. Here David chides Saul for his murderous pursuit of him, holding up the spear and cruse to view as an evidence of the innocence of his own attitude toward Saul. Every word of the conversation is significant: “If Yahweh have stirred thee up against me”—of what conduct is David’s God not capable? “Then let him smell an offering”—what a materialistic, sensuous conception of God! “But if it be the children of men, *cursed be they before Yahweh*, for they have *driven me out* this day that I, should not cleave unto the inheritance of Yahweh, saying, ‘Go, serve other gods.’” David, seeing himself on the verge of expulsion into Philistia, thinks of this as exile from Yahweh’s land and presence. That this is his own point of view and not merely that which he imputes to his foes is clear from his further statement, “Now, therefore, let not my blood fall to the earth *away from the presence of Yahweh*.” This thought of God is of the same sort as that placed upon the lips of Jephthah in Judg. 11:23 f., “So now Yahweh, the God of Israel, hath dispossessed the Amorite from before his people Israel, and shouldest thou [viz., Ammon] possess them? Wilt not thou possess that which Chemosh, thy God, giveth thee to possess? So whomsoever Yahweh, our God, hath dispossessed from before us, them will we possess.” Yahweh was evidently thought of as a national God pure and simple. His interests were limited to his own land and people. Other gods were recognized as having equally legitimate sway over the fortunes of other peoples. He could be depended upon for effective and hostile reaction against his people’s foes (I Sam., chap. 5). He resented the recognition within Israel, in any form, of the gods of other nations.<sup>1</sup> He demanded an exclusive and undivided loyalty from his people.

<sup>1</sup> The record of the prophetic protest against Solomon’s arrangements for the worship by his wives each of her own god is certainly late. But there can be little doubt that the prophetic party of his day already felt that Yahweh was outraged by the presence of these foreign cults in his own capital and under the auspices of his own king.

The splitting of Israel into two fragments, first after the death of Saul when Ishbosheth and David led the rival factions, and again after Solomon's death when the leaders were Jeroboam and Rehoboam, created an unprecedented situation in Israel religiously. Yahweh was now the God not of one nation merely, but of two; and these were bitterly hostile each toward the other and for years were engaged in wars upon one another. This situation sooner or later was bound to have its effect upon the thought of God. It was subversive of the very idea of a national God. That idea is in essence exclusive and particularistic. A national god as such can be the god of only one independent, political unit. The only way for a national god to increase his territorial domain is by conquest or by absorption. The moment he extends his favor toward another people than his own and admits them as a nation on an equal and independent footing to the circle of his worshipers, at that moment does he cease to be a national god.

The foregoing proposition holds good notwithstanding what Durkheim says apropos of the expansive nature of religion, viz.:

It is far from true that religious internationalism is a peculiarity of the most recent and advanced religions. From the dawn of history, religious beliefs have manifested a tendency to overflow out of one strictly limited political society. It is as though they had a natural aptitude for crossing frontiers and for diffusing and internationalizing themselves. Of course there have been peoples and times when this spontaneous attitude has been held in check by opposed social necessities; but that does not keep it from being real and, as we see, very primitive.<sup>1</sup>

That the Yahweh-religion shared this tendency common to all religions would be evident if we could establish the fact of the widespread use of the name "Yahweh" outside of Israel in the pre-Mosaic age.<sup>2</sup> This has been confidently claimed by many scholars (Sayce, Delitzsch, Clay, Radau, Zimmern, Rogers, *et al.*), but my colleague, Dr. D. D. Luckenbill, assures me that with one possible exception the genuine Yahweh-names cited in support of this contention do not antedate the time of David.<sup>3</sup> If, however, the fact should yet be

<sup>1</sup> *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1915), pp. 288 f.

<sup>2</sup> See George A. Barton, "Yahweh before Moses," *Studies in the History of Religions Presented to Crawford Howell Toy* (1912), pp. 187-204.

<sup>3</sup> See a forthcoming article in *The American Journal of Theology* by D. D. Luckenbill upon this question.

proved, the nationalizing of the Yahweh-religion in Israel would be one of those "opposed social necessities" which would militate against the further operation of the internationalizing tendency of Hebrew Yahwism. As long as the national idea of Yahweh persisted, there could be no other attitude within Yahweh's nation than that of political and religious opposition toward all non-Yahwistic peoples. The setting up of a second and independent Yahwistic kingdom was in principle a bursting wide open of the national God-idea. If there might be two separate kingdoms each serving Yahweh, why not any number of such kingdoms? Yahweh thereupon ceases to have a favorite, indeed an only people, and becomes the God of two or more peoples alike, with their mutually exclusive ambitions and ideals.

We must bear in mind, of course, the fact that the Disruption did not bring a body of new people into being as a Yahwistic kingdom; but on the contrary merely signified a division of the recognized followers of Yahweh into two camps. Yahweh had no more followers after the Disruption than before; but they were grouped antagonistically and were each claiming his championship of their rights. Up to a certain point, the situation is the same as that brought into existence by civil war within the nation. The followers of Yahweh are fighting one another and invoking his aid in their destructive activities. But there the resemblance ceases. In the civil war, each side is struggling for supremacy within the nation; there is no thought of permanent separation. The nation will continue as before, but with a change in the government. The movement that brought the Disruption looked to separate organizations from the start. It was distinctly a secession enterprise. It is true that there were periods when the South was in vassalage to the North during the later history; but this was not necessarily in the original plan and the South was actually free and independent often enough and long enough to keep the idea of its own self-government continually to the fore. Thus the bearing of the political situation upon the thought of God cannot have escaped attention.

So far as we know, this situation in Israel and Judah is one without an exact parallel. Nowhere else in the world have two separate and independent kingdoms, holding to the idea of a national god, been found serving one and the same god as arbiter of their destinies.

Neither the seizure of the throne of all Egypt by Piankhi, the Nubian, in the eighth century B.C., nor the enthronement of Esarhaddon, of Assyria, as king of Babylon, involved the same sort of a situation. In the first place, the political result in neither case was the institution of two independent monarchies, but rather the subjection by conquest of an opponent and the incorporation of the conquered territory in the victorious kingdom. In the second place, the religious situations differed, in that neither Egypt nor Assyria was so distinctly monolatrous as Israel and Judah. Amon and Ashur were members of pantheons. Esarhaddon, for example, frankly recognized Marduk as god of Babylon, though serving Ashur in his own proper realm. The problem for religion with which we are dealing can arise only where monolatry is clearly recognized and logically followed out.

It may be that the fact that Yahweh was primarily not a god of a land, but of a people, rendered this opposition of part against part less revolutionary in its effect upon thinking than it might have been otherwise. Yahweh was the God of Israel before he became the God of Canaan.<sup>1</sup> He was not indissolubly tied to the soil as were the Baalim. His relations were with the same people after the Disruption as before. He was still the God of the Hebrews as over against all other nations. But even so, "a house divided against itself cannot stand!" The idea of Yahweh as Israel's God can survive only on condition that Israel remain an undivided whole. If it permit itself to be divided into two separate and independent nations, it has prepared the way for the complete breakdown of the national God-idea. Yahweh was one of the most effective bonds uniting the fragments of Israel into a nation. Without Yahweh there could have been no Israel. With Yahweh presiding impartially over a divided Israel, political and religious isolation and independence are alike imperiled. If Yahweh be God of two nations, evidently his interests are not identified with those of either one, as is inevitably the case with a strictly national god. He favors neither the one nor the other. Indeed the suspicion must arise that he is more or less indifferent to both alike and that he is dealing with them primarily not from the point of view of the advantage of either or of both, but from the standpoint of his own superior and more comprehensive purposes.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. R. Smend, *Lehrbuch der alttestamentlichen Religionsgeschichte*, 2d ed. (1899), pp. 18, 113 f.

As a matter of fact, after the Disruption, we do find Yahweh's activities frequently transcending the limits of Hebrew territory.<sup>1</sup> The J and E narratives make non-Israelites act and talk as though they were worshipers of Yahweh. For example, Pharaoh and Joseph both speak of "God" and both mean the same God (Gen., chap. 41). The Philistine Abimelech's God is evidently Yahweh (Gen., chap. 20 and 26:29). Laban the Syrian is clearly presented as a worshiper of Yahweh (Gen. 24:50; 31:49). The Sodomites too worship Yahweh (Gen., chap. 18). Balaam, Yahweh's prophet, is a non-Israelite; and Balak, King of Moab, recognizes Balaam's God as his own (Num., chaps. 23 ff.). Rahab, the harlot of Canaanitish Jericho, speaks in the same way (Josh., chap. 2).

In like manner, the widow of Zarephath, a Zidonian, is informed in advance by Yahweh of the coming of Elijah, and recognizes in him a man of God in whose mouth is the word of Yahweh (I Kings, chap. 17). Naaman the Syrian's victories over his foes were given to him by Yahweh, God of Israel (II Kings 5:1). Benhadad of Syria sends his courtier Hazael to inquire of Elisha the will of Yahweh regarding the outcome of his illness; and Elisha declares to Hazael that it is Yahweh's will that the latter shall be king of Syria (II Kings 8:7-15). Micaiah ben Imlah thinks of Yahweh as setting the forces of other nations in motion to accomplish his own ends within Israel (I Kings 22:15-28).

This sort of thought regarding the gods was not by any means confined to Israel. For example, Ishtar of Nineveh visited Egypt in the time of Amenophis III at the latter's own request. Esarhad-don says that he restored the temples of Marduk in Babylon by the command of the god himself. The Babylonian priests represented Cyrus as having been called in by Marduk to punish Babylon for its sins. Hammurabi sent back the captured goddesses of Elam to their own land, probably because of misfortunes which he attributed to them, even as the Philistines did in the case of the ark of Yahweh. Mesha, king of Moab, explains Israel's conquest of Moabitish territory as due to the fact that Chemosh was angry at his land.

Wherever these forms of statement may occur, they indicate an increasing familiarity on the part of those who use them with the

<sup>1</sup> See Peisker, *Die Beziehung der nicht-Israeliten zu Yahweh* (1907).



thought of their gods as concerned with and operative in affairs outside of the limits of their own kingdoms. It is evidence of the tendency toward expansion, of which we spoke above, manifesting itself in spite of the limitations naturally surrounding a national God-idea. The most striking statements of this kind are from the lips of Amos. In the oracles against the foreign nations with which his prophecy opens, his denunciation is in one case, at least, based upon an offense which did not concern Israel at all directly. Yahweh is represented as intervening to punish a people not because of any injury done to Israel, but because of the violation of the common laws of humanity (Amos 2:1). But in 9:7, Amos goes even farther and classes Israel as standing in the same relation to Yahweh as Ethiopians, Philistines, and Syrians. This must not be pushed so far as to make Amos the spokesman of a universal conception of God; for, as his book abundantly shows, he still gives Israel the first place in Yahweh's heart. But the national idea of God is here stretched to the breaking-point.

This larger view of God which comes to expression with Amos was the imperative need of the times in religion. The old, limited, national conception of Yahweh could not have met successfully the problems forced upon Israel's attention by the progress of Assyria in the West-land. Yahweh had to grow or die. The development of Assyria as a world-power was itself largely conducive to the development of a world-view of Yahweh.<sup>1</sup> It forced men to think in larger terms and to take longer views. Another influence working in the same direction came from the cosmological myths of Babylonian origin that were taken over and incorporated in the J document of Genesis. These were not monotheistic, to be sure; but they dealt with world-problems and represented a relatively high thought of God. To these and other forces at work upon the Hebrew conception of Yahweh must be added the situation produced by the Disruption. Just what share it had in preparing the way for monotheism, we cannot say. As far as the records of the Old Testament show, it was a silent partner in the co-operative enterprise—but there is no reason for ignoring or minimizing its influence on that account.

<sup>1</sup> See George Adam Smith, "The Influence of Assyria upon Prophecy," *The Book of the Twelve Prophets*, I (1896), 44-58.

It must have done its part in the common task. If Yahweh could preside over the destinies of two nations with conflicting and opposing aims, why need the thought of his control stop there? Having crossed the line of influence beyond which as a national God he could not go, there were no fixed limits to his further progress.

Hebrew monotheism was the resultant of a complexity of social forces, among which the ethical interest held, perhaps, a dominant place. No one of these influences, least of all the effect of the Disruption, could have brought in monotheism single-handed. Each had its own contribution to make to the great end, without which the end would not have been achieved when it was or as it was. All we are asking for here is that room shall be made among the previously recognized contributory influences for the influence of the Disruption, which it would seem cannot have been of altogether minor significance.